

# Visualizing and Verbalizing<sup>®</sup>

by  
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*for*  
*Language Comprehension*  
*and Thinking*

SECOND EDITION

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# 1

## I Make Movies When I Read

Twenty years after writing the first *Visualizing and Verbalizing for Language Comprehension and Thinking* manual, I get to talk with you again. You are a person I write to, a person I teach to, a person I share my passion with, and a person I believe in. You are someone who can do anything.

Writing to you after this long absence, I wonder if your hands look like my hands. Strangely wrinkled and scary, weirdly resembling my mother's, the fingers nonetheless type like fire as my thoughts unfold to share with you the importance of imagery for comprehension and cognition. You are about to embark on a journey across the pages of this book into the world of dual coding, the imagery-language connection that underlies comprehension and thinking.

Come back in time with me now as I recreate the scenario of when I first became aware of the connection between imagery and language comprehension. It all begins on a spring day, years ago.

I am returning to the office in a medical clinic that I share with my friend and associate, Pat Lindamood. We teach reading and spelling to children and adults who are referred to us because they have experienced severe difficulty with language and literacy skills. Many have been previously labeled dyslexic. All day, every day, I teach individuals to perceive sounds within words to improve their decoding and encoding. I am not aware of a separate comprehension dysfunction because I,

like many others, think difficulty with reading comprehension is caused by weak decoding and weak oral vocabulary.

Passing through the pediatric wing as I head to my office, I see children playing on the floor, babies wrapped in blankets, and parents reading books to little faces. Past the colorful fish tank and down the hall, my small office awaits me. Opening the door, I smile at the size of it—a window and just enough space for an old desk, a filing cabinet, and two chairs.

Time passes quickly as I work with my afternoon students, and now it is late in the day, the last of the sun coming in through the window. I'm sagging just a little in my chair, but I still semi-hover over my student with the last remnants of my intensity. I'm working with Allan. Allan is a college student, majoring in architecture, and he is here to improve his spelling, which is very weak and interfering with his writing skills. Over the last few weeks, his phoneme awareness has improved, and we have been applying his phonological processing to spelling, but he is struggling to remember orthographic patterns in words and is primarily spelling phonetically rather than accurately.

Needing a break in the lesson from spelling word after word, I decide to have Allan read and give me a verbal summary. Handing him a college level skill book, I ask him to read aloud so I can be certain he is decoding accurately.

He accurately reads the page of material, and I take the book from him, saying, "Good job. Tell me what you read."

Allan gives me a very complete summary, beginning with the main idea and then including all the details. To my amazement, he infers, concludes, predicts, and evaluates the material. He is confident and involved in the activity—a much different Allan than the one that struggles with spelling.

I stare at him, saying, "That was really an incredible summary. How are you able to do that?"

Looking at me, surprised and now shy, Allan replies, "I don't know."

Realizing that Allan seems embarrassed and unsure of himself because of my question, I reassure him. "That really was good. You have very good reading comprehension. How did you do that? If I know what you do to remember what you read, perhaps I can teach others to do it."

S A M P L E L E S S O N

*Picture to Picture*

Setting the Lesson

Nanci: "Let's start. Here is what we are going to do." I quickly draw two heads on a piece of paper. "You look at a picture. You tell me about the picture, and your words will help me create a picture in my mind." I draw a line from the first head to a thought bubble in the second head.

Verbalizing a Given Picture

Nanci: Giving Sofie the picture, "Here is the picture. I don't get to see it. Your words are going to help me see the picture in my mind."

Sofie: Takes the picture and looks at it. Smiling shyly, she says, "Okay."

Nanci: "What is this a picture of, an elephant, a bird...?"

Sofie: "A boy."

Nanci: "Good. I'm going to give you one of these Magic Stones for that." I put a stone in front of her. "I can picture a boy. Should I see a big boy, a little boy, a...?"

Sofie: "A little boy."

Nanci: "Little like a baby boy? Or little like three years old, or five years old? Help me know what to picture."

Sofie: "He is..." She is staring hard at the picture and trying to decide. "He is five years old."





Nanci: "Great. Here is another Magic Stone." I continue to reinforce and motivate with the stones throughout the lesson, but I will omit further mention of it throughout the rest of the manual. "I can picture that. Help me picture more. Should I picture blond hair, red hair, or black hair? And what should I picture him doing?"

Sofie: "He is sitting and looking at a duck."

Nanci: "Okay. I've got that pictured. Help me picture what the little boy looks like. Start at the top. What color should I picture for his hair? Blond? Black?"

Sofie: "Red. He has red hair."

Nanci: "Okay. I can picture red hair. Should I picture it long, short, straight, or curly? You have to tell me everything you see so that I can picture it."

Sofie: "His hair is short and it is sort of curly."

Nanci: "Great. Your words have made me picture a little boy with short red curly hair. Keep going. Does he have clothes on?"

Sofie: Smiling, "He has clothes on. He has a blue sweater and brown pants."

Nanci: "Good. Should I picture the blue sweater with short sleeves or long sleeves? What about his pants, should I picture long brown pants or short brown pants?"

Sofie: "The sweater has long sleeves...and buttons on the front. And the pants are short. He also has a white shirt."

Nanci: "A white shirt! Where should I picture that? Over his sweater or under his sweater?"

Sofie: "It is under his sweater. You can only see the collar. And...and...there is a tie. A

